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ABSTRACT

Data were obtained on the activities and attiudes of 48 associate members and 229 commercial exhibitors at county and district fairs. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect the data. Analysis of the data showed that most associate members had participated in more than one county or district fair in 1970, but less than one-fifth had participated in the Wisconsin State Fair. Commercial exhibitors had exhibits at only one county or district fair, and only 1 in 10 had participated at the state fair or at Farm Progress Days in 1970. The majority of both associate members and commercial exhibitors employed the equivalent of less than two full-time employees for fair work, but some employed the equivalent of 10 or more full-time employees throughout the year for fair work. About one-fifth of all respondents obtained at least 40% of their gross income from fairs. Slightly less than half of the commercial exhibitors spent $250 or more to exhibit at the fairs. Most respondents maintained that elimination of the fairs would have a marked impact upon them. Slightly more than half of the respondents specified changes that they felt should be made to improve fairs--improving the facilities, organization, and administration. Implications of the study results are that two main characteristics must be recognized: (1) fairs are composed of both local and non-local people, and (2) the motives of people involved in fairs may be altruistic or personal. (Author/DB)

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with the activities and attitudes of persons who represent two kinds of interests at county and district fairs in Wisconsin. The first group of respondents were associate members of the Wisconsin Association of Fairs. These persons supply goods and services to the fairs. The second group of respondents were called "commercial exhibitors," and are composed of a sample of businesses and enterprises which rent space at fairs and exhibit their products and programs to the fair-going public.

Data were obtained from 48 associate members and 229 commercial exhibitors using mailed questionnaires. In addition, interviews were conducted in communities where fairs were held with businessmen and others. Most associate members were found to have participated in more than one county or district fair in 1970. Less than one-fifth of them, however, had participated in the Wisconsin State Fair. Commercial exhibitors, by and large, had exhibits at only one county or district fair; and only one in ten of them had participated at the state fair or at Farm Progress Days in 1970. Even fewer had exhibited at an Electric Show last year.

The majority of both associate members and commercial exhibitors employed the equivalent of less than two-full-time employees for work connected with fairs. Some respondents employed the equivalent of ten or more full-time employees throughout the year, however, for fair work.

About one-fifth of all respondents obtained at least 40 percent of their gross income from fairs. Slightly less than half of the commercial exhibitors spent $250 or more to exhibit at the fairs.

Whereas one-third of the respondents revealed that elimination of

county and district fairs would have no foreseeable impact on their operations, most respondents maintained that elimination of the fairs would have a marked impact upon them, with some believing that the result would be devastating.

Slightly more than half of the respondents specified changes which they felt ought to be made for improving fairs. Many of these recommended changes involved improving the facilities, organization, and administration of the fairs.

IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study point up the fact that if fairs are to be understood, two of their main characteristics must be recognized. The first of these is that fairs are composed of both local and non-local people and interests. Second, some people involved in fairs have rather altruistic motives, whereas others' motives are more personal. Thus, fairs are at once a curious mixture of motives, actions, and ideals.

With these generalizations in mind it is easier to explain some of the apparent differences observed among commercial exhibitors at eight fairs. About half of them exhibited at only one fair, hired few people, spent and earned little money, and seemed to have a "couldn't care less" attitude about the perpetuation of the fairs. Most of them were exhibiting not as a money making venture, but as a means of giving support to a community--the fair.

Other commercial exhibitors seemed to represent a different situation. They exhibit at many fairs, expend relatively large amounts of money, and receive back considerable amounts of money in return. Their livelihood depends on what they earn at fairs, and they have relatively little reason for exhibiting as a means of supporting the community. Most of them are strong advocates of continued and even expanded fairs.

If balanced decisions regarding fairs in Wisconsin are to be made, the viewpoints of both kinds of commercial exhibitors should be considered. More specifically, policies which would result in fewer fairs, or less well attended fairs, would likely not hurt the local exhibitors very much, if at all; but would be quite harmful to those exhibitors who participate in many fairs, and whose livelihoods depend on those activities.

Associate members are more like the second kind of exhibitor mentioned above in their attitudes and activities. Their work takes them across the state to many fairs, they expend relatively large amounts of money and labor, and are, in turn, rewarded for these expenditures. Although data were not collected regarding the specifics of their expenditures, associate members must spend thousands of dollars each day during the fair season. Some support for this estimate may be found in the fact that carnival companies alone operate for a total of more than 300 days each year during Wisconsin's two-month fair season. These persons understandably appear to strongly favor a perpetuation of fairs in the state.

Despite differences in their motivations and economic dependency upon fairs, respondents in this study were sufficiently unified in their opinions regarding needed improvements to provide a basis for the following recommendations:

1. The president, secretary or other representative of each fair association receiving state aid should be required to participate in an annual workshop co-sponsored by the state and the Wisconsin Fair Association. The primary purposes of this workshop would be to: (a) improve administration of fairs, (b) promote needed innovations, and (c) facilitate communication among fair officials, associate members, state administrators, and others.

2. Facilities at fairgrounds for the comfort and safety of people

should be improved and regulated. This recommendation applies especially to restrooms, eating places, and shower-rooms. In the interests of public health, for example, food handlers must have adequate, convenient, and hygienic places to wash. Not only should these facilities be considered for the public, but for the full-time, transient fair workers. State health personnel might (a) provide regulations for fairs, (2) periodically inspect fair facilities, and (c) recommend elimination of state subsidies to fairs who do not provide adequately for fair-goers and fair-workers' health and welfare.

Judging from the activity of the respondents at county and district fairs, Electric Shows, Farm Progress Days, and the Wisconsin State Fair, the county and district fairs draw their greatest attention and involvement.

While we have no trend data, it does appear that fairs have "lost" their big agricultural exhibitors to the Farm Progress Days and it does not appear likely that these exhibitors will ever return to the fair unless fairs offer more of the advantages of Farm Progress Days. The Progress Days have much to offer both exhibitors and the audience--factors which fairs do not now offer. The two major advantages seem to be that: (1) Farm Progress Days are strictly agricultural shows, and (2) the equipment can be viewed in actual field operations.

This does not mean that fairs will have no agricultural exhibitors, but their present program will have to be more attractive if they want to increase the number of such exhibitors in the future. Many local dealers still exhibit at fairs and will continue to do so. Many of these dealers, however, may do so more out of an obligation to support a local fair rather than for commercial reasons.

All this suggests that fairs may have to look elsewhere for commercial exhibitors unless they change their format to more attractively and dynam-

ically show agricultural equipment.

Considerable evidence indicates that the $324,000 expenditure authorized by the state for premiums paid to Junior and open-class exhibitors is more than returned to the state directly through sales and income taxes. Properly operated, therefore, fairs can be not only educationally beneficial but economically rewarding as well. Fair associations must recognize a fact which carnival operators recognize, namely, that junior and open-class exhibits are the backbone of the fair, and that unless they receive proper attention and facilities, the rest of the fair will eventually suffer.

PREFACE

The Center of Applied Sociology has accepted the responsibility for evaluating county and district fairs in Wisconsin. This is the fifth of nine proposed reports being developed by the Center dealing with this evaluation. The evaluation project is being made easier by the excellent cooperation of many individuals and groups who are deeply concerned about the future of fairs in the state. Among these are the following whom we gratefully recognize and thank:

University Extension and the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, University of Wisconsin, co-sponsors of the study; the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Local Affairs and Development, State of Wisconsin, who have legal authority for the supervision and coordination of fairs; the Wisconsin Association of Fairs and its president, W. A. Uthmeier; the Wisconsin Exposition Center, Vernon G. Wendland, Administrator, and Leslie C. Hayden, Supervisor of County and District Fairs. Most importantly, the hundreds of Wisconsin citizens who have responded in such splendid fashion to requests for vitally needed information.

The leader of this project is Dr. John R. Christiansen, Visiting Professor of Sociology from Brigham Young University, assisted by Dr. Hans C. Groot, Department of Agricultural Journalism, and Mrs. Lorna Miller, specialist with the Center of Applied Sociology.

Donald E. Johnson, Director
Center of Applied Sociology
September, 1971

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years the number of persons attending county and district fairs in Wisconsin has been equal to about half of the state's total population.[1] In 1970, for example, an estimated 2,885,721 people attended Wisconsin's county and district fairs-- a number equivalent to 65 percent of the state's 1970 population. Data from other studies, and preliminary data from the present study, indicate that the fairs meet many needs of participants. These include social, recreational, economic and educational needs.

The extent to which Wisconsin's county and district fairs meet educational needs of the state's citizens is the central focus of the overall study. However, social, recreational, and economic aspects of these fairs are also being considered.

Objectives of the Study

The present study deals with the participation of associate members of the Wisconsin Association of Fairs, and commercial exhibitors, at fairs and expositions throughout the state. More specifically, the study was designed to provide a greater understanding of: (1) the extent and kind of participation by associate members and commercial exhibitors at fairs in Wisconsin, (2) the economic importance of such participants particularly, and the state generally, and (3) changes which these participants believe should be made at county and district fairs.

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[1] John R. Christiansen, Hans C. Groot, and Donald E. Johnson, Background of the Study. Preliminary Report No. 1, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, and University Extension, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1971, p. 6.

Before proceeding further, however, a more complete description of "associate member" and "commercial exhibitor" will be made. Associate members belong to the Wisconsin Association of Fairs. This association has as its members all fairs in the state which receive state-aid. In addition the Wisconsin Association of Fairs includes others as "associate members." Included as associate members are two fairs which do not receive state aid (the Stoughton Junior Fair, and the Portage County Fair Association), and 65 businesses (in 1971) which provide goods and services to the fair associations. These goods and services include such varied commodities as: carnivals, concessions, rides, entertainment, advertising, trophies, bookkeeping, insurance, livestock pens, and tents. Approximately 60 percent of associate members have their headquarters in the State of Wisconsin, whereas the remainder have their headquarters throughout the United States, mostly in the Midwest.

"Commercial exhibitors" likewise represent a wide variety of business and non-business interests. All of them obtain exhibit space at fairs, and show exhibits which vary in focus from pianos, farm equipment, and dishware to pollution, peace, politics and poverty.

Methodology

Mailed questionnaires were used as the chief means of collecting data for this study. In March, 1971 one-page questionnaires were sent to all 1970 associate members of the Wisconsin Association of Fairs, and to a sample of commercial exhibitors.

The commercial exhibitors were selected using lists of all 1970 exhibitors at eight county and district fairs.[2] The lists were pro-

[2]The eight fairs are: Northern Wisconsin State Fair, Chippewa Falls, Rock County 4-H Fair, Inc., Janesville; Jefferson County Fair, Jefferson; Lodi Union Fair, Lodi; Dane County Junior Fair, Madison; Ashland County Fair, Marengo; Tri-State Fair, Superior; and the Waupaca County Fair, Weyauwega.

vided by the fair secretaries of these fairs. The fairs themselves were selected randomly from all state-aided fairs in the state. (Figure 1). Because fairs were used as the sample units rather than exhibitors themselves, caution should be used in generalizing the findings to all commercial exhibitors at Wisconsin county and district fairs.

Based on the 1970 membership list, 71 questionnaires were sent to associate members, of which 52 or 73 percent were returned, with 48 being usable. Commercial exhibitors returned 247 (77%) of the 322 questionnaires mailed to them. Of the returned questionnaires, 18 were not usable. Thus, the total number of questionnaires used in the analysis was 48 and 229 for associate members and commercial exhibitors, respectively. The data obtained from these surveys were edited, coded, punched into machine cards, and analyzed using the UNIVAC 1108 computer at the University of Wisconsin Computer Center.

Data were also obtained from interviews conducted with carnival operators, concessionaires, merchants, and bankers. These were unstructured interviews which varied in length from a few minutes to approximately one hour. They were conducted during the time that fairs were being held during 1971 in: Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, Fond du Lac, Janesville, Seymour, Stoughton, and Webster, Wisconsin.

EXTENT OF PARTICIPATION

This section of the report deals with the extent of participation by associate members and commercial exhibitors in county and district fairs throughout the state, and at the state fair. In addition, commercial exhibitors in the sample were asked about their activities at Farm Progress Days and at Electric Shows. The findings concerning those activities will be presented in this section as well.

County and District Fairs

Associate members participated in more county and district fairs than did commercial exhibitors. The typical commercial exhibitor exhibited at only one fair--most often the fair nearest them. Associate members, on the other hand, usually took part in more than one fair, the average number being nearly five.

Wisconsin State Fair

Most associate members and commercial exhibitors from whom data were obtained had not participated at the 1970 Wisconsin State Fair. Such participation was more frequent, however, among associate members than it was among the commercial exhibitors. Of the associate members, 19 percent had participated in the State Fair, whereas 12 percent of the commercial exhibitors had done so.

Farm Progress Days

The first Farm Progress Days were held in 1954 under the auspices of an incorporated state board representing state and federal agricultural agencies and the University of Wisconsin College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. The event, held annually since then, was an outgrowth of university sponsored field days.

The show was organized not only to exhibit the latest in farm equipment, but more importantly also to demonstrate the equipment in action as well as new harvesting and production techniques.

Farm Progress Days are held on a rotational basis--both in terms of its theme and geographical location. One year corn production is emphasized, the next year grassland and the third small grains and second crop forages. The show is also held in a different county each year and, to date, no county has sponsored the event twice.

Exhibit space lately averages around 400 lots, and is available

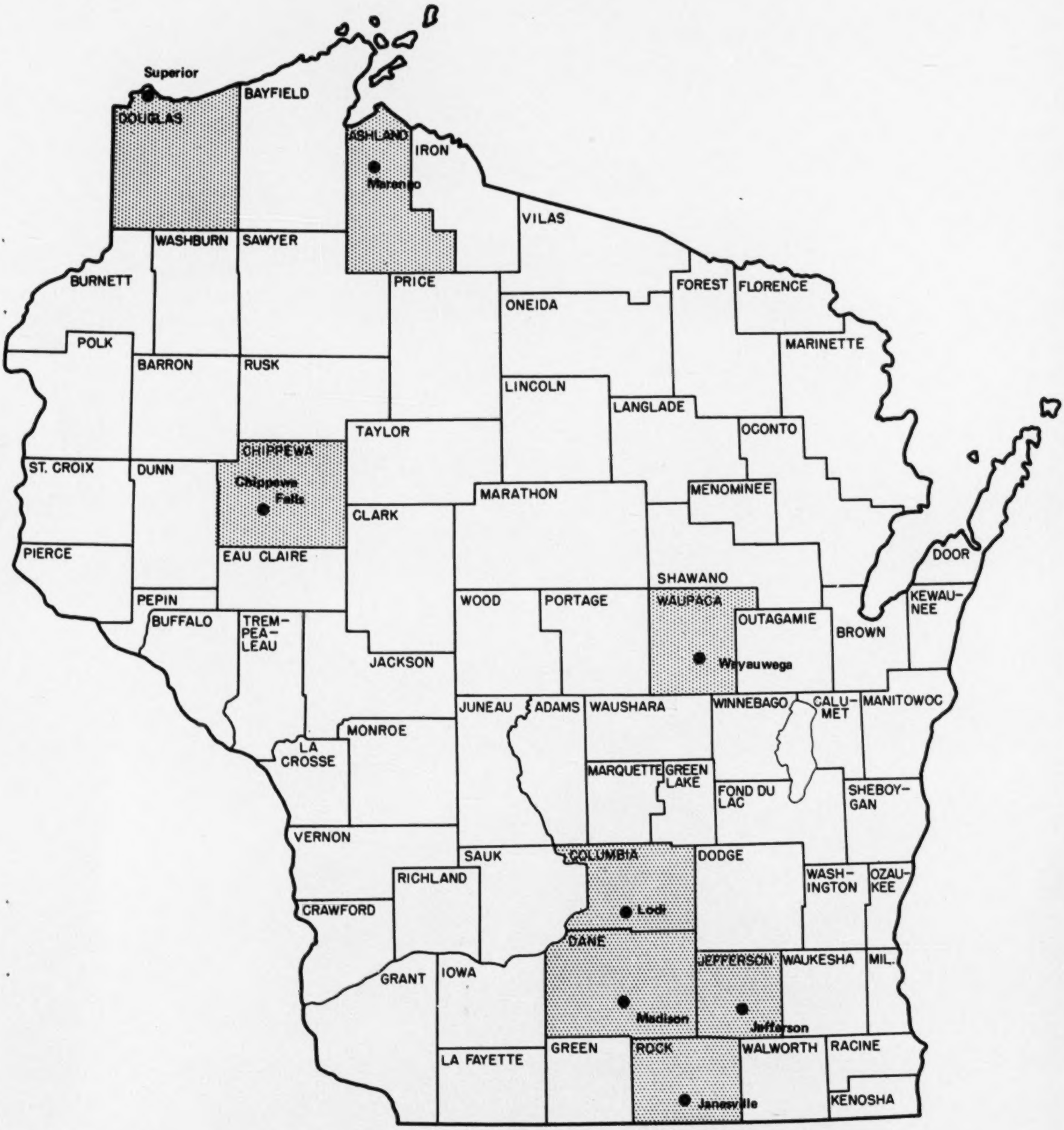

Figure 1. —— Location of fairs from which lists of commercial exhibitors were obtained.

to any agriculturally related company. Attendance trends, averaging more than 100,000 during each of the last three shows, generally are said to be on the increase.[3]

Only 17 percent of the commercial exhibitors returning questionnaires had participated in Farm Progress Days, and even fewer had exhibited at the Wisconsin State Fair.

Electric Shows

Considerably fewer of the Commercial Exhibitors in the sample had participated in Electric Shows throughout the state. Only six percent had been involved in activities at Electric Shows.

KINDS OF PARTICIPATION

A great variety of goods and services are provided by associate members. Likewise, commercial exhibitors bring to the fairs many different kinds of exhibits. As shown in Table 1, associate members most frequently are involved in amusement rides, concessions, and "grandstand entertainment." Included in the "grandstand entertainment" category are such activities as wrestling, western music shows, clown acts, and even the arranging of parades. The equipment rented out by associate members ranges from animal enclosures to data processing machines.

The two categories containing the kinds of exhibits most frequently shown at fairs by commercial exhibitors were: "Large manufactured products," and "Household goods and appliances" (Table 2). The first category mentioned includes items such as hay-laoders and tractors,

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[3]The information presented in this section is based on an interview with George Wright, currently the secretary-manager of the state board that governs the Farm Progress Days.

Table 1.--Distribution of Goods and Services Provided to Wisconsin County and District Fairs in 1970 by Associate Members.

Types of goods and services provided	Number	Percentage
Grandstand entertainment	14	29
Amusement rides and concessions	12	25
Demolition events and racing (auto, motorcycle, tractor, horse)	5	11
Fireworks	3	6
Trophies and ribbons	3	6
Rental equipment	3	6
Food and drink	2	4
Insurance	1	2
Other (including no answer)	5	11
TOTAL	48	100

Table 2.--Distribution of Exhibits, by Type, Provided to Wisconsin County and District Fairs in 1970 by a Sample of Commercial Exhibitors.

Type of exhibit provided	Number	Percentage
Large manufactured products	52	23
Household goods and appliances	42	18
Public service information	27	12
Home and farm improvement	23	10
Commercial information	22	10
Miscellaneous	16	7
Travel equipment	14	6
Foods	12	5
Farm supplies	11	5
Other (including no answer)	10	4
TOTAL	229	100

whereas the second category deals with stoves, furniture, dishwashers, cookware, and similar household furnishings. The "public service" category of Table 2 deals with exhibits with interests such as: environment, peace, schools, community development, and health. Categorized under "Commercial information" in Table 2 are: insurance, soil test reprints, maps, charts, etc. Included in the "Miscellaneous" category are: souvenirs, musical instruments, knitting machines, and other products.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF PARTICIPATION

This section of the report presents some information dealing with the economic importance of associate members and commercial exhibitors' activities at fairs. The analysis gives some indication of the economic impact of this participation on the state as well as for participants themselves.

Number of Employees

The number of Wisconsin residents which each associate member and commercial exhibitor employed for their work with country and district fairs was estimated. The respondents were asked to report on the number of employees they used from Wisconsin at fairs in terms of full-time-equivalents. That is, they were asked to compute the total number of time units (days, weeks, months, or years) that their employees spent on work connected with county and district fairs, and express that total in units of years.

Most of the respondents' employees had a total of less than one FTE yearly employee form Wisconsin doing work connected with fairs. The average for associate members was 1.5 years, and the equivalent number for commercial exhibitors was less than half a year (.4). Six of the

48 associate members employed 10 or more FTE yearly Wisconsin residents, and 26 (11%) of the commercial exhibitors employed 10 or more.

The associate members who have the greatest number of employees are probably carnival operators. One relatively large carnival which operates 12 days in Wisconsin, for example, has 100 full-time employees for six months of the year. Most of these employees are not Wisconsin residents, however. Another average size carnival company which operates 33 days in Wisconsin employs 30 people, only a few of whom are Wisconsin residents. One relatively small, Wisconsin-based carnival which operates 18 days in Wisconsin hires 14 people for the summer season. All employees of this small carnival are Wisconsin residents, as are a number of family members not counted as employees.

Percentage of Gross Income

The firms represented by associate members and commercial exhibitors typically obtained only a relatively small percentage of their gross income from their participation at Wisconsin fairs. On the average, firms of associate members obtained about 10 percent of their gross incomes from their activities at fairs in Wisconsin. The comparable percentage for commercial exhibitors was less than that--4 percent. One out of every five firms of associate members and commercial exhibitors, however, obtained at least 40 percent of their gross income for work done for Wisconsin's fairs. In fact, 12 percent of the commercial exhibitor's organizations obtained all their income from activity at fairs in Wisconsin.

Money Expended at Participation Sites

Having the knowledge that most commercial exhibitors exhibit at only one fair, and that their employees work on fair exhibits for only a relatively short time, it is not surprising to find that these exhibit-

ors' exhibit costs average only about $238 per exhibit. Slightly over half (52%) of the commercial exhibitors spent less than $250 in direct costs for exhibiting at fairs in 1970 (Table 3). However, the "average" does not give a complete picture of exhibitors' monetary input to the economies of the places where they exhibit. Nearly 15 percent of the commercial exhibitors spend $1,000 or more to exhibit at county and district fairs throughout the state. The maximum expenditure reported was $30,000 by an exhibitor who attended many fairs in 1970. Exhibitors whose expenditures for exhibiting were relatively high sold such items as: farm equipment, cookware, snowmobiles, and gas and electric appliances.

Carnival operators, particularly, spend considerable money during their engagements at county and district fairs throughout the state. Throughout the working season, carnival employees receive weekly paychecks which range from about $85 to $125. Some bonuses are paid near the end of the season for longevity on the job as well. Each place in which a carnival plays receives an economic benefit from payrolls which may range from $1,000 to $10,000 depending upon the size of the carnival. The usual practice of carnival companies results in payrolls being paid at least once in the towns where these companies operate.

In addition to employees of carnival companies, an even larger number of people are usually attached to carnivals through concessions. Thus, one carnival operator who employed 40 carnival workers estimated that there were 70 concessionaires attached to his carnival--all of whom earned and spent money.

Expenditures made by these people for living in communities where fairs are being held are not insignificant. Many of the year-around carnival workers and concessionaires live in trailers which reduces housing and eating costs. However, many of the seasonal workers must obtain

Table 3.--Distribution of Expenditures by Commercial Exhibitors in Connection with Exhibiting at County and District Fairs in Wisconsin, 1970.

Expenditures	Number	Percentage
Less than $250	120	52
$250 - 499	41	18
$500 - 999	33	15
$1,000 - 2,499	21	9
$2,500 - 4,999	7	3
$5,000 - and above	7	3
TOTAL	229	100

housing as well as "eat out" in towns where fairs are held.

In addition to living expenditures for carnival employees, concessionaires, and their families, other expenditures are made by both carnival companies and concessionaires for such items as gasoline, vehicle repairs, clothing, and laundry. Interviews conducted with 48 proprietors revealed a considerable variation in business which can be attributed to the fairs. Businesses such as department stores, furniture stores, shoe stores, and drug stores were affected relatively little. However, grocery stores, liquor stores, bars, hotels, motels, restaurants, and auto parts stores had noticeable increases in sales during fairs.

The total economic impact of the fair depends, of course, upon the size of the community in which the fair is held, and the size of the fair. Interviews conducted in a Wisconsin city of approximately 40,000 where a junior fair having no carnival was held indicated that only a bar, a motel, and a drive-in restaurant noticed an increase in busines. On the other hand, in a community of about 2,500 with an "average" size fair including a carnival a considerable increase in sales was noted during the fair period. Describing the economic impact in this community one bank official stated:

> "Over the last five days our cash position has increased approximately 5% over the previous week. In talking to certain local businessmen, there is no doubt in my mind that the Fair has a significant effect upon the local grocers, laundramat, taverns, and even our post office. I certainly feel that the Fair is an excellent event for our community."

Perhaps the largest financial benefit derived by communities where fairs are held involving carnivals is the direct payment by the carnival owners to fair associations. Under the usual contract negotiated between carnival owners and fair associations, carnival companies pay the associations between 25 and 35 percent of their gross sales. These sales

involve rides and food concessions under the ownership of the carnival company, but do not usually include sales of the midway concessionaires, "freak shows," and commercial exhibits. Depending upon the contract, therefore, about one of every three dollars spent at the carnival remains in the community. This fact, together with the findings regarding other expenditures by carnival owners, workers, and concessionaires and their families suggests that perhaps as much as two-thirds of the income generated by fairs may remain in the community where fairs are held.

It should be acknowledged, however, that communities themselves pay a price for the influx of fair attenders and the income derived from them. The demands for regulation of traffic and law-enforcement generally are often great enough to require not only extra duty for police officers in cities where fairs are held, but assistance from county sheriff's officers as well. Usually their work is preventative in nature, requiring long and late working hours for supervision of fair activities and direction of traffic, but occasionally involving action on charges ranging in seriousness to assault and murder.

Additionally, city and county street and sanitation workers are often involved in such work as cleaning up litter and debris after fairs have closed, and in converting fair-grounds to non-fair oriented activities.

Tax Revenues Generated

It is not within the scope of this study to accurately estimate all of the monetary returns which the State of Wisconsin receives from county and district fair activities. However, generally reliable estimates can be made of revenues from sales taxes and income taxes paid by carnival companies and concessionaires which operate in Wisconsin.

In 1970, carnival companies remitted an estimated $56,000 to the

state in sales taxes. Due to the marginal economic position of some companies, a smaller amount of approximately $4,000 was paid in company income taxes.

Concessionaires operating at county and district fairs paid an estimated $105,000 to the state in sales taxes in 1970. Most of the sales tax revenues concessionaires comes from midway games. The remaining amount derives from "light" food sales, such as cotton candy, snow cones, popcorn, caramel apples, etc., and from "heavy" foods such as sandwiches and meals. No estimate could be made for income taxes paid by concessionaires.

Sales tax revenues generated by the carnival companies and concessionaires have increased dramatically in the past two years. In 1969 carnival companies remitted approximately $39,000 in sales taxes. The corresponding figure for concessionaires was only $32,250. The increase in 1970 is due in part to increased sales and to more effective means of collecting the sales tax, and to an increase in the sales tax from 3 to 4 percent.

The estimated $165,000 paid in sales and income taxes by carnival companies and concessionaires in 1970 is the equivalent of just over 50 percent of the state's expenditure of $324,000 for premium subsidies to county and district fairs. No estimates are available for other tax revenues paid to the state which are generated directly and indirectly by these fairs. Examples include:

1. Income taxes paid by concessionaires and their employees.
2. Income taxes paid by employees of carnival companies.
3. Income taxes paid by employees of Fair Associations.
4. Taxes generated from parking receipts, general admission revenues, paid admissions to grandstand shows, racing events, etc.
5. Income and sales taxes paid by tent and equipment companies, ribbon and trophy suppliers, etc.

6. Taxes paid by food and beverage companies which supply fairs, and the proportionate share of their employee's income taxes.

7. Income and sales taxes generated from sales by commercial exhibitors at fairs, e.g., sales of farm machinery and equipment, household goods and appliances, snowmobiles, souvenirs, musical instruments, etc. Advertising at fairs also results in sales at a later time which generates additional tax revenues.

8. Income taxes paid by employees of associate members and by employees of commercial exhibitors.

9. Income and sales taxes generated by increased sales by community businessmen at fair time. Examples include sales by restaurants, service stations, auto repair shops, grocers, laundramats, taverns, newspaper advertising, publishing companies, etc.

10. Taxes generated through "advertising" and sales by livestock breeders and other open class exhibitors at fairs.

The above partial list of tax revenues generated by fair activities indicates the state may be gaining as much or more in tax revenues than it is paying out in premium subsidies. A previous report in this study stated: "If, in fact, the educational value of exhibiting is anywhere close to that which exhibitors think it is, the state is getting a bargain for its investment of approximately 70,000 exhibitors."[4] Granting that the state has additional expenses relating to fair activities, such as salaries of inspectors, nevertheless it appears the tax revenues generated by fairs make the state's investment an even greater "bargain" than originally estimated.

Impact of Non-participation

As a means of assessing the importance of Wisconsin's county and district fairs on the associate members and commercial exhibitors, they were asked the following questions: What kind of impact would be felt

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[4]John R. Christiansen, Hans C. Groot, and Donald E. Johnson, Participation and Attitudes of Open and Junior Class Exhibitors, Preliminary Report No. 2, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, and University Extension, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1971, p. 31.

on your firm's operation if no county or district fairs were held in Wisconsin in 1971? Specific answers to this question were given by 92 percent of the associate members, and 83 percent of the commercial exhibitors.

About one-fifth (21%) and one-third (36%) of the associate members and commercial exhibitors, respectively, responded with answers revealing that elimination of the fairs would not make any difference to their organizations' operations. Most of the respondents who answered in this way seemed to feel that the community expected them to make an "appearance," and they responded to this expectation believing it would result in no earnings for them.

Seventeen percent of the associate members, and an identical percentage (17%) of the commercial exhibitors believed that little impact on their organizations' operations would be felt if county and district fairs were not held. On the other hand, 37 percent of the associate members and 23 percent of commercial exhibitors indicated that a substantial impact on their firms would be felt if fairs were eliminated, and 17 percent of the associate members and 7 percent of the commercial exhibitors maintained that elimination of the fairs would be a severe, if not devastating blow, to their organizations.

As a result of interviews conducted with carnival owners, it became apparent that they felt that having open-class, junior, and commercial exhibitors at fairs was vital to their success. One operator reported that they had tried unsuccessfully to operate their carnival in communities without exhibitors in socalled "still dates," and that they would not do it again. He maintained that the "agricultural exhibits by the young people, particularly, were the backbone of the fairs" and vital to his own success.

ATTITUDES CONCERNING NEEDED CHANGES

Both kinds of respondents in this study--associate members and commercial exhibitors--were asked what improvements ought to be made in Wisconsin's county and district fairs. Approximately 40 percent of both associate members and commercial exhibitors responded either that no improvements were needed, or they did not respond to the question at all, suggesting that they could not suggest any specific improvement. About 60 percent of the respondents did give specific suggestions for improving the fairs, however. The five improvements most frequently mentioned by associate members as being needed were: more competent fair management, modern sanitary facilities for people (e.g. restrooms and showers), more adequate fair buildings, improved grounds including parking and racetracks, more strict enforcement of laws pertaining to beer sales for minors, and safety.

Many commercial exhibitors likewise agreed that facilities for people such as restrooms and eating places needed to be improved. In addition, many commercial exhibitors thought improvements ought to be made in organizing the exhibiting space of the fairs, rejuvenating exhibits, and hence increasing attendance for commercial exhibits.

SPECIAL SURVEY OF FARM PROGRESS DAYS' EXHIBITORS

Based on interviews with 37 commercial exhibitors at the 1970 Farm Progress Days, there appears to be a definite decline in interest on the part of agriculturally-related companies to exhibit at county and district fairs and the Wisconsin State Fair as well.

A majority of the respondents (57%) said they had exhibited at a Wisconsin County or District Fair at some time or another. When asked, however, if they had exhibited at any such fair in 1970 the majority (68%) said "no." Moreover, many of these same respondents said they had

no plans to ever exhibit at fairs again--at least not in the foreseeable future.

Explanations for not having exhibited at fairs included such comments as:

"Insufficient sales force to warrant taking part in fairs."

"Not enough exposure to the right audience."

"Local dealers take on the responsibility of exhibiting at fairs."

"Lack of interest on the part of fairgoers."

"Too many city kids at fairs. No farm trade there."

"High costs, poor exhibit locations and lack of interest."

Some 73 percent of the respondents "strongly agreed" that exhibiting at Farm Progress Days is of greater commercial value than exhibiting at either county or district fairs. An almost equally large percentage (65%) "strongly agreed" that Farm Progress Days provide a better means than fairs for bringing new agricultural information to farmers.

The respondents generally perceive fairs as social events that rate high in entertainment value, whereas the Farm Progress Days are primarily as educational events. They also feel that the two events draw different audiences. Some typical comments of commercial exhibitors at the Farm Progress Days are:

"Fairs are great for 4-H programs, but commercially they're a disaster."

"Fairs attract city people--not our audience."

"There's too much competition at fairs from horseraces and the midway. Fairs attract lookers--not buyers."

"Fairs are something you take the family to--it's for entertainment."

"People go to fairs for the carnival and midway--at least partly."

"Farm Progress Days are strictly a farm show."

"Farm Progress Days are good because you can see the equipment in action.

"Farm Progress Days are more progressive and innovative--have more to offer to farmers looking for information."

A number of respondents also mentioned that Farm Progress Days have better facilities to offer the exhibitor, and that the management maintains better liaison with exhibitors.

Previous reports in this series include:

Christiansen, J. R., H. C. Groot, and D. E. Johnson, Wisconsin County and District Fair Study Preliminary Report Number 1: Background of the Study. Madison, Wisconsin: Center of Applied Sociology, University of Wisconsin, February 1971.

Christiansen, J. R., H. C. Groot, and D. E. Johnson, Wisconsin County and District Fair Study Preliminary Report Number 2: Participation of Open and Junior Class Exhibitors. Madison, Wisconsin: Center of Applied Sociology, University of Wisconsin, April 1971.

Groot, H. C., J. R. Christiansen, and D. E. Johnson, Wisconsin County and District Fair Study Preliminary Report Number 3: Participation and Attitudes of Judges, Educators and Youth Leaders. Madison, Wisconsin: Center of Applied Sociology, University of Wisconsin, June 1971.

Groot, H. C., J. R. Christiansen, and D. E. Johnson, Wisconsin County and District Fair Study Preliminary Report Number 4: Participation Trends and Publicity. Madison, Wisconsin: Center of Applied Sociology, University of Wisconsin, July 1971.

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